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INTRODUCTION

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114 THE PRESENT SURVEY was originally written as
12 a thesis for the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford University and submitted in 1956 for the degree of Bachelor of Letters (B. Litt.). It is difficult, having just completed for publication a monograph based on my own field work, to undertake the publication of a thesis written in student days, dealing with the same area but based on the work of others. It inevitably leads to self-conflict, for the new self does not always agree with the old. Further, the survey does not claim to be comprehensive. It is presented, however, as a first step in the gathering together of the earlier literature that can be best relied upon for information concerning the social structure of the Mbuti Pygmies of the Congo. It has two major objectives.

121 One, and the most important, is to set down
• 127 in English a straightforward description of such ethnographic facts as are known about the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest, based on the published and unpublished material available up to 1956, with the addition of a few references up to 1960. For the Putnam material I am most indebted to Mrs. Anne Eisner Putnam, who made available all the notes left by her late husband, Patrick Tracy Lowell Putnam.

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must confess to leaving out such references wherever it seemed plain that the whole passage referred to that one authority. The impression of insidiousness is heightened by the fact that almost the entire bulk of the material available is general and descriptive rather than specific and analytical. In trying to sift that which falls properly into the latter category, then, we necessarily must abandon the continuity and sense that existed in the original works. It is therefore not to be expected that the present survey will in any way offer a coherent ethnography of the Mbuti.

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Fifth, in the course of the survey (pp. 194–241) I make similar use of the unpublished notes of Patrick and Anne Putnam and expand their accounts of the net hunters with a limited amount of material from my own field notes dating from 1951 and 1954–1955. My own interest during those two first visits to the Ituri were other than strictly anthropological but concerned certain aspects of social organization. As I was working in the same area as the Putnams, the material is valid and useful for the rounding out of their observations. In

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have a concentrated body of Mbuti Pygmies in the Ituri Forest and some apparently scattered Pygmy groups farther west and through the forests of equatorial Africa (Figs. 1–2). Of the latter, unfortunately, too little is known for inclusion here. 101 128

For the Ituri Mbuti one of our main sources is the *four-volume* work by Schebesta (1938, [P.152-B] 101 114 127

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1941, 1948, 1950). Schebesta divides the Mbuti (whom he calls "Bambuti") into three major groups: Aka in the north, Sua in the south, and Efe in the east (Fig. 3). His first trip to the Ituri was spent in an over-all coverage of the forest, during which he culled facts from all these groups but necessarily at a superficial level. Realizing this and desiring to make a more profound study, he returned and concentrated on the Efe in the triangle bounded by the roads joining Mambasa, Irumu, and Beni (Fig. 3). The bulk of his work concerns these Efe, who hunt primarily with bow and arrows, and as it is the only group of which he has detailed knowledge it is the only group that we present from his work with any degree of fullness. His references to the Kango in the west, the Aka, and the Sua, are too few to form a systematic account of these societies as such, and, as already mentioned, we see little value in isolated, unsystematic ethnographic data.

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There is, however, another source on the Ituri Pygmies (mostly unpublished) in the form of the field notes of an American anthropologist, Patrick Putnam, who first went to the Ituri in 1928 and was resident there until his death at the end of 1953. His material is concerned with the Sua who, unlike the Efe, are net hunters. With this material are also the notes of his widow, Mrs. Anne-Eisner Putnam, who lived in the Ituri for more than eight years, until 1954; and, finally, my own field notes covering my first two visits to the same area (Epulu District) in 1951 and 1954. I combine this material as a single source, indicating its exact origin in the text, partly because, in the main, it covers one definite area, and even one definite hunting band, and partly because both Anne Putnam and myself benefited by the immense knowledge of Patrick Putnam, without necessarily being in complete agreement.

Apart from these two main sources, and a

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number of articles published in various anthropological journals, there is nothing that we can draw upon for the present work. We have, then, two distinct groups—Schebesta's Efe Mbuti and Putnam's Epulu (Sua) Mbuti, archers and net hunters, respectively.

A word should be said about classification. Schebesta's division of the Ituri Mbuti into Aka, Efe, and Sua is a linguistic classification and, at that, a division not according to Mbuti languages but to the villager linguistic groups—Mangbetu, Lese, and Bira, respectively. It thus corresponds to tribal groupings of villagers and does not seem to be particularly significant for the purposes of sociological analysis. (Schebesta is more concerned with problems of racial and cultural purity, and believes the Efe language to be of Pygmy origin; consequently, he considered the Efe Pygmies to be racially and culturally the purest.

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turally the purest. This assumption, however, is open to question.) In the seeking of a more significant classification, and with every available source to hand, it has appeared that, as might be expected, there are certain differences in social structure related to differences in economic activity, notably hunting technique. It is fortunate that Schebesta's Efe are trackers and archers, while Putnam's Sua Mbuti are not hunters. Thus we have represented two groups not only linguistically and territorially distinct but also distinguished by hunting technique. The importance of this latter distinction appears in the course of the present study. While it is not claimed that such a classification is comprehensive or final, at least it is factual and more directly related to sociological differences than Schebesta's linguistic division. Consequently, we draw on sources in so far as they are

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127 related to either of these economic groups of
128 Mbuti—archers or net hunters. When sources cannot be related to our detailed study of these two types, we omit them, unless there is some special reason for their inclusion.

128 Now, before the survey itself, it is necessary
114 to evaluate briefly our two main sources, as certain deficiencies in each should be understood. The more properly critical section follows the survey; here such criticism as is presented is offered so that we can estimate the true nature and value of the facts presented by each source.

Schebesta

114 Schebesta, as a follower of Schmidt, is concerned with the over-all problem of "the pygmy races of the world" and their interrelationship. He began his study among the Semang Negritos in 1924. Then in 1929 he undertook the first of three trips to Africa on which he based his work "Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri." The first trip, lasting a year and a half, was spent traveling through the Ituri "*sur des pistes caravanières . . . dans toutes les directions*" (Schebesta, 1952, 16) in order to get an all-over picture of all the Mbuti and to "*établir leur unité de race et de structure sociale*" (Schebesta,

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cannot offer absolute sanctuary, for each one of these villagers brings with him *akami* and, even worse, the threat of witchcraft and sorcery. In the last resort, then, the only recourse of the Mbuti will be to learn to master these arts themselves, unless in time they learn to discern between the possibilities of the one as a legal mechanism and the practical ineffectiveness of the other as a physical threat.

In other areas of the forest, where the village tribes are less afraid of the forest, living and hunting in it themselves, as well as cultivating, the attempted exploitation of the Mbuti has been no less and its general pattern and degree of success have been similar, but there has not been the same attempt by villagers to assimilate the Mbuti. This seems to be true not only in the northern part of the Congo, but also further west and in the Gabon.[11] But while in those areas the hunters may not be assimilated into the village system to the extent of being admitted to initiation, they are also, it seems, more ready to accept village beliefs such as those in witchcraft and sorcery, and are evidently more dependent upon the villagers in other respects. However, these areas need considerably more investigation before any useful comparisons can be made. Here it is sufficient to stress that in a situation where the village cultivators are afraid of the forest and unwilling to move freely within it and exploit it, and perhaps correlated with that fact, the Mbuti maintain a form of social organization based on recognizable principles that plainly have a dual function—the maintenance of internal order and the maintenance of separation and distinction from the villagers. In such a situation, the Mbuti adopt only the outer form of the village social organization while in the village, in a form of joking relationship between the two groups. The joking relationship and the dual function of the Mbuti principles of organization effectively counter all attempts of the villagers to effect an institutional subordination of the Mbuti. The value systems of the two people are in complete opposition, and this reflects the whole nature of the relationship between them. The ultimate attempt of the villagers to assert supernatural authority over the Mbuti, while derided by the Mbuti as *bulé*, or empty (but malevolent), might be a cause of Mbuti willingness to undergo the *nkumbi* initiation, as a means of acquiring power through assimilation of like power, to combat this authority.

On the other hand it might be argued that the villagers, in initiat-

[11] Information on the relationship of the pygmies of the Gabon to the village cultivators was supplied by Mr. Leon Siroto, from unpublished field notes.